

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan Guided by a Set of Principles

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will take place over more than 20 years. The implementation principles will ensure that the Plan is carried out in a manner consistent with the goals and objectives of the Restudy effort.

Expedite ecosystem restoration benefits. We recognize that this is an ecosystem in peril, and time is of the essence. Implementation of the restoration as scheduled will provide substantial hydrologic, water quality, and ecological benefits to the ecosystem by the year 2010. Throughout the implementation phase we will improve and expedite projects whenever possible.

Use a flexible approach to implementation. The Comprehensive Plan's flexibility allows for further improvements as we refine individual projects and obtain new information. The Plan does not provide all the answers – no plan could. It does, however, contain an aggressive adaptive assessment strategy that includes independent scientific peer review and a process for identifying and resolving uncertainties. This approach provides an efficient way to allow restoration to move forward now and for the agencies to make necessary mid-course corrections. Periodic updates of both the Comprehensive Plan and the Implementation Plan will allow us to achieve the highest levels of restoration as rapidly as possible. We will ensure that the implementation process provides the flexibility needed for restoration success.

Integrate Comprehensive Plan features with ongoing projects. Ongoing restoration projects, such as the Modified Water Deliveries Project and the C-111 Project, are integrally linked with the Comprehensive Plan. These ongoing projects will provide a substantial down payment towards restoration of the Everglades. The Comprehensive Plan includes a number of components that can be efficiently and quickly implemented as part of these ongoing projects. We will

Science Advisory Review Panel

Independent scientific peer review is an important part of the overall restoration process. The Administration, led by the Secretary of Interior, is committed to establishing a Science Advisory Review Panel under the auspices of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. The Task Force is working with the National Research Council to establish this panel. Once established, the panel will work with the Task Force, in concert with the Restudy Team, other scientists, and the public to determine which scientific issues should be addressed by the panel.

integrate implementation of the Comprehensive Plan with ongoing restoration projects.

Maintain ecosystem focus. The Comprehensive Plan was developed and evaluated based on its contribution to restoration of the south Florida ecosystem. As individual components or groups of components are further planned and designed, we will conduct analyses and evaluations to measure the overall contribution to system-wide goals. We will ensure that project components are developed to provide the maximum contribution to restoration of the entire south Florida ecosystem.

Ensure responsible use of fiscal resources. Because of the large size of the area, the Plan is “conceptual” in nature. More detailed technical studies and designs must be accomplished to ensure that each project has the best design to achieve its intended purpose and that the project is shown to be a sound investment. Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan represents a substantial financial investment by all levels of government. We will ensure that fiscal resources are used efficiently and effectively.

Provide assurances to beneficiaries. Water links the natural system with the urban and agricultural sectors in south Florida. To a great extent, the ability to sustain the region's natural resources, economy, and quality of life

depends on the achievement of the Plan's goals to enhance, protect, and better manage the region's water resources. New storage facilities will eventually lessen urban and agricultural user's dependence on the natural system for water supply. As components are completed, more water will become available for the ecosystem. We are committed to ensuring that the environmental benefits continue to flow to the ecosystem. As we implement the Plan, we are also mindful of our commitment to continue providing urban and agricultural users with needed water while new facilities are under construction.

Design for water quality improvement. The Comprehensive Plan includes a number of features to protect and improve the quality of water in natural areas. There are also opportunities to improve water quality further as part of the design process for the components of the Comprehensive Plan. During implementation, we will ensure that the components of the Plan are located, designed, and operated consistently with existing and future water quality protection criteria and restoration targets. The recommended study to develop a comprehensive integrated water quality plan will examine remaining water quality needs for the entire ecosystem.

Continue the inter-agency, inter-disciplinary approach. The effort to develop the Comprehensive Plan has been an open, collaborative process involving federal and state agencies, local governments and tribal participation. This inter-agency, inter-disciplin-

How Long will it Take to Restore the Everglades?

Actually, a relatively short time. Environmental improvements will follow hydrologic changes. We will see improvements in the ecosystem during the first ten years of the Plan's implementation. In fact, coupled with the restoration projects currently under way in the Kissimmee River and other areas, we should see gradual, but very important, improvements over the next few years. It will take many years to obtain all of the benefits that the Plan will provide.

Why Can't We Restore the Ecosystem Faster?

Perhaps first and foremost, ecosystems do not always respond immediately after specific hydrologic changes are implemented. Just like it took the ecosystem many years to respond to the negative changes made 50 years ago, ecological responses to our improvements will also take time. Second, time is needed to plan and design the specific features in more detail before they can be built. Pilot projects must be implemented and monitored in order to reduce the uncertainty associated with some of the elements of the Plan. Finally, an incremental approach to implementation provides opportunities to assess performance and refine plans to more effectively meet overall restoration objectives.

any process ensured that the Plan evolved from a healthy diversity of backgrounds, interests, and agency missions. The flexibility and openness of this process will continue during implementation to allow for continual dialogue and improvements to the Plan.

Continue to involve stakeholders and the public. Outreach and public involvement have been an integral part of the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The public and stakeholders have played a key role in getting to a plan that supports a sustainable south Florida. Through the process afforded by the National Environmental Policy Act, we will continue to seek this input during the implementation phase of each feature.

Develop contingency plans as appropriate. We recognize that there are technical and cost uncertainties associated with some of the major components included in the Comprehensive Plan such as aquifer storage and recovery. As each component proceeds towards actual implementation, technical uncertainties will be addressed through pilot projects and more detailed analyses. We will develop contingency plans as necessary during the implementation phase for appropriate components and technologies to ensure that the benefits of the plan are obtained.